

Concord Public Schools
and
Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)
Thursday, February 28, 2019 Minutes
12:30-2:30pm

Location: Ripley (120 Meriam Rd, Concord), Conf. Room 4

www.concordsepac.org concordsepac@gmail.com

Action items highlighted

1. Open Meeting
Carol read purpose of the SEPAC. Parents, please keep questions general in nature.
Wendy Frohlich will be on the phone listening.
2. Public comments, limited to 1 minute each (10min)
[None]
3. Approval of minutes from January 24, 2019 Board Meeting (5 min)
Highlight action items received a positive response. Name spelling change: Erin Joncas
Minutes are final
4. Briefing on "Special Education Update Panel", Co-Presidents (5 min)
Carol: Listed who was present. 25-30 people were present
Shaina: Overview- Thanks for collaborating between SEPAC and School Committee and District
-Main areas of focus
-Each principal gave an update about their buildings
-Laurie and Heather agreed that it was a great meeting. They liked knowing what is on people's mind.
5. Presentation of Concord Public Schools and Concord-Carlisle Regional School District FY20 Budget, Laurie Hunter and Heather Bout (40min)
Laurie will walk us through the budget:
Slide 1: Article 11, Concord Budget: 39,390,163
140K delta.
Started the budget from scratch. Came in under 3%.
The middle school conversation will come up later.
Slide 2: Zero-based budget process. Review of all areas: Legal (significant change- they charged \$1100/hour. This new firm charges \$210/hour. All legal services are under one roof- SPED and other issues. Let the old firm finish cases and start new cases with new firm. It was a seamless process that started in August. Firms were gracious. New law firm: Murphy Lamere and Murphy based Quincy.), salaries, staffing (they took into account staff that wasn't being budgeted for. We got everyone into the budget. Everyone is now assigned to a department. Staff is the biggest cost driver.), contracted services (Facilities based- who can we call in and who can we use inhouse.), Special Ed. in district (how are we serving in district with "WestEd report") and out of district (Tuition is lined up with cost- Shaina asked about Circuit breaker- we got into the month

of August and said that it would be 65%- This got corrected later in the year. We keep an eye on the governor's budget. It is still not fully funded. There is lobbying going on for this and chapter 70. Budgets are voted late at the legislative side. Shaina asked about SPED has a cushion for student that needs to go out of district during the year. Laurie: We use a contingency. We look at what it was and what it might be. We're calling it a contingency now.), supplies and materials (we're looking at copiers, transportation - Carol asked about CASE- Laurie said that they are doing well and the district is in a good place with them), reorganization of personnel structures- ie. central administration (we're trying to do more with what we have and spend smartly. Now that we have budgets, we can see where we can move money and do some saving.) New norm is the zero based budget process. This budget shows us where the money needs to go. We itemize the line items. This is an awful lot of work. Jared, in the business office, is really good at this.

Slide 3: Article 11 Budget Drivers

Teacher salary: this increased recently

Shaina commented: we like not seeing a SpEd as a line item.

We're trying to meet the kids' needs first. It is always about the kids first. Let's not pigeon hole kids. SpEd is a big cost driver, but we want to come across as seeing the kids needs first.

Slide 4: Cost Savings

We didn't reduce staff, we cleaned up the budget. Prior administration: tutors had accumulated a contingency. We had overshot the tutor cost. We built a really big cushion and we now have money to work with when we need it.

Slide 5: Retirement/Separation Incentive Savings

We put some incentives in place for people who want to retire. We didn't want to push anyone out. We could bring other people in at the mid-level cost. Teachers were able to choose to participate in the incentive plan over the course of 2 years. This program shifted the demographic of teachers a bit.

Slide 6: This is a level service budget.

There are no big ticket items. We're sustaining what we have and continuing with the best budget.

Heather- we're worried about the budget when there is a gap. This year is a really different feel. This is a zero based budget, so we know what we need and why. The increase is so low, we feel 100% confident. We have all of the facts behind us. To get in anywhere under 3% is a very low increase. Maybe they'll move their guideline before town meeting?

Carol: When is the next meeting?

Heather: The next time they talk about it is March. They have confirmed their guideline. They might or might not change their guideline.

Laurie: It is a very cordial relationship. We rolled over and added on. Last year was an 8% increase. We had to work backwards. We had to lay a few people off. This year is a very different approach.

Shaina: is there is a new group? The composition of people is new?

Laurie: There is a demand for service and a demand to keep costs down. This is the discussion we'll have for a while. What is sustainable? Can it be coordinated with the level of services offered.

Guidelines for the HS:

Slide 1: Article 15

Biggest difference between HS and Concord is that Concord carries all the employees benefits. At the HS the region carries all of this. E&D Excess and Deficiency. Cash flow- this is where you go when you need funds. OPED

Slide 2: Biggest driver is teachers. We cleaned up the laptops. More kids were opting to borrow a laptop. We'll provide a laptop to every Freshman. We're nursing along 7 year old laptops. The middle school had a plan to update laptops.

Slide 3: Cost Savings

This affects both of the towns.

Slide 4: Incentive plan

There were fewer teachers who participated at the HS level.

Slide 5: OPEB: Health insurance

Formula: theoretical number in the middle. We're in really healthy shape for a regional school district. This is a big part of the town discussion. We've been funding this at the expense of our stabilization fund. We'd take more out to fund the operation portion of the budget. We changed the pattern. We cut our revenue down by 300K. Moody said you are going on the watch list. Course correct or you will be on the financial watch list. Moody said that E&D needs to be the priority over OPED. E&D is the contingency account.

Heather asked there is a contingency for new people coming into the district. There is contingency for the unknowns-

Laurie: We try to identify the contingencies. We're watching the living conditions.

Utilities affect it. This is all so fluid. This works differently from a business budget. This is easier to do in Concord because the budget is healthy.

Slide 6: Assessment Comparison with debt/without debt

4.44%

There was a swing- the enrollment between Concord and Carlisle drives it. The regional agreement drives the cost, which happens Oct. 1st. I'm hoping to change this.

They appreciated the commitment to rework our fiscal cycle. It has been a good collaboration between the district and the Finance Committee

Carol asked which is the new law firm. Laurie: the new law firm is Murphy Lamere and Murphy based Quincy.

6. Concord Middle School Feasibility Study Warrant Article, Laurie Hunter and Heather Bout (40min)

Heathery Bout:

Slide 1: Middle School- We requested funding at town meeting for a feasibility study. We face a time sensitive planning challenge related to both middle schools. The buildings, infrastructure, and equipment are all old.

Slide 2: Article 14 requests \$1.5 million for:

Feasibility study of a new CMS building, a schematic design of a new CMS building
Hiring of an owner's project manager. Town would create a building committee.

Slide 3: We have not yet designed a building, but we have early input from Finegold Alexander Architects. They recommend building one building of ~125K SF to be located at the Sanborn site.

Slide 4: Building Histories and facilities planning

Slide 5: Current conditions- 55-49 years old. Sanborn was built as JR. high school. Peabody was never meant to be a middle school

Slide 6: Long-term viability of Sanborn and Peabody- It is projected that these buildings could last longer with capital expense plans- multimillion dollar budget over 5 years. We will still have been in the school buildings 8-9 years without capital investments.

Slide 7: Timeline of CMS Planning:

Slide 8: Facilities Planning Committee Formed

They hired Finegold Alexander Architects to ask questions.

Slide 9: Finegold Alexander Report

Guess what? The buildings are at the end of their lives, yet they have been well maintained.

Slide 10: Finegold Alexander Report

It will cost (\$68 million) the same to fix them up and make them work as it would to build a new building.

They did not recommend adding on.

Building 3A does not include a full size gym.

Slide 11: Recommendations:

Reconfiguration of Sanborn or new building on Sanborn site.

Reconfiguration involves maintenance, relocation of students during construction, less energy efficient,

New Building on Sanborn site involves construction without disruption to education, relocation of footprint to maximize land use, maximizes energy efficiency, lower maintenance needs.

This cost is without MSBA= concept of renovate vs. build new

Difference in price is not large, but the value is great.

Shaina suggested the bar graph is helpful.

Slide 12: Operational

Slide 13: Outdated infrastructure

Infrastructure is awful.

Carol- Maynard is not in school because of the building. Are kids safe in these MS buildings?

Heather- explains that kids are safe there. When asbestos is involved, we have higher costs when there are maintenance issues that come up.

Casey- If you are renovating with asbestos, it is incredibly expensive.

Heather- renovating Sanborn doesn't make sense, but we need to make it clear to others.

Slide 14: Aging Equipment

Slide 15: Overcrowded Buildings:

No bathrooms near the modular buildings.

Sanborn custodial closet converted to learning space

Peabody "cafeteria" is congested and has lockers in it.

Slide 16: Educational Shortcomings

The current buildings don't incorporate the current educational philosophies. The new buildings could include:

21st century, project-based learning, interdisciplinary learning, breakout spaces, grade team implementation

Shaina- mentioned inclusion.

Heather agreed.

Slide 17: Process and timeline

We applied for federal MSBA funding twice.

Slide 18: Likelihood of MSBA Reimbursement

After the highschool fire, I said, middle school people don't you get any ideas.

Rates have declined over the years. We're always going to be compared against others.

The federal MSBA has heard some grief about supporting Concord so much. Our HS funding was suspended mid-way through. We don't have high confidence that they are going to come rushing back to work with us.

Slide 19: Project Cost-Construction

Laurie: a big urban school gets help. Lowell and Revere got in. The pot of available money is not growing. The construction cost is rising.

Casey: Why aren't we getting funding?

Ericka: What are the criteria?

Heather: Imminent risk of collapse, overcrowding, MSBA agrees that we need a new building.

Laurie: When we've applied in the past, we get into the 35% list, but not to the 17% cut.

Ericka: We have a lot of beautiful schools. Maybe they need to be reminded that communities that need help are getting it.

Laurie: In conversations, they say, this is not political.

Slide 20: Project Cost- Construction

Construction costs are rising at 7%/year

We're estimating that a building we're building will be in the \$90 million range.

Laurie: The HS was a \$92 million project.

Heather: If we build the HS today, it would be over \$100million

Median household in Concord over 25 years will be taxed at \$764. This is not a choice between ideas. We have to invest in them and it is a matter of how much.

The number could go up or down depending on MSBA support.

If we wait another year, the cost goes up.

Slide 21: Agenda

Slide 22: Costs of waiting

Major infrastructure failure risks

Heating lines, roofs, septic system are at the end of their lives.

Those will cost \$6 million to replace.

Slide 23: Costs of Waiting:

Timeline bumps out 2 years

Escalating out construction costs 7%, \$5-15 million extra added per year

Operational costs \$1 million

Maintenance costs \$200K

Cost of waiting: Spending \$6-22.3 million

Slide 24: Potential Reimbursement

Reimbursement is based on a town's "wealth factor"

CCHS project baseline reimbursement rate was 34.5%

We are guessing that that if we do get reimbursement the cost of waiting will eat up the reimbursement funding.

Slide 25: Cost of Waiting, tax impact

Start feasibility Study

This does not include maintenance.

Every year that we wait, the cost goes up for Concord tax payers.

Shaina asks: what could we do with the \$90 million?

Laurie: the \$90 million cost is low. We didn't start with this argument. We realized that.

Shaina: thank you for investing in our schools

Helen: do those numbers include operational costs?

Heather: no

Eva: do these costs include future changes/plans?

Heather: There will be savings with utilities. In terms of growth going forward, biggest theme is flexibility. Flexibility at a school we visited was great. Technology was built in but could be changed. We need to be able to adapt. I can't tell you how it will look but flexibility is key.

Slide 26: Benefits of Self-funding

Potential savings, provides use of Peabody to town sooner.

Slide 27: Benefits of Self-funding

We can design a school that fits the community better: gym space that supports the concord rec dept. Performance space, this building could be a space to support the whole community.

Slide 28: Next Steps

Needs to be passed in two places

Town meeting Monday 4/8

Ballot Vote

Shaina: is the school board interested in a letter of support from SEPAC?

Heather: yes

Casey: meeting happens tomorrow morning. We can all go there and other items will be discussed.

Heather: if you all vote to support it, you can announce through SEPAC that we support it. Write a letter for FB and read it at the finance board meeting. Send a letter to the editor.

Casey: this was really good. It has a ton of info. You can tell there was a lot of work to get it down.

Heather: anything else?

Ericka: make it more visual, use a graph, numbers underneath them and they are the same. It is abstract until you see photos.

Eva: The fact that you mentioned the 3 infrastructure items, they are giving you trouble currently, that is important to highlight. Good graph of what it cost to make CCHS and what it will cost to build it now.

Shaina: add in percentages

Eva: Parents of kids see it differently from retired people. Show them that the cost will be greater. Show them the savings.

Laurie: we're grateful for the invitation to this meeting.

7. Envisioning Middle School Education- Open Discussion, Heather Bout (20min)

What do we want MS to look like down the line? There was a survey we sent out. Put yourself in the future. Think about what does MS education look like? We're talking about education, not just facilities.

Lots of feedback from parents, faculty and staff. This is not the last chance for input. This is the vision part of the project. How do you see it?

Casey: Universal design, investing in SpEd programs that can be flexible from year to year. The intensive learning program at Thoreau has cubicles that has enhanced the learning experience.

Carol: flexibility is the key word. The needs of kids changes yearly.

Heather: fluidity of process is important.

Shaina: Pathways program was put off to the side at the HS. How are the MS students housed? Is it off to the side?

Carol: Our kids are using technology to connect with the world and make progress. How do we keep that in the education process?

Laurie: One kid in the intensive program had the iPad with communication program. It changed his whole world for him.

Carol: little flexible things can change so much for someone.

Casey: We need to make sure that people are trained to use the expensive software. IT can create the ability of the students to communicate and then access the curriculum.

Heather: we can include people much more

Carol: Taly and Casey were on the search committee

Taly: Emphasis on programming, technology. Sensory friendly spaces are important.

We can think about how high the ceilings are. Sound can reverberate off the ceilings.

Casey: It is a vulnerable age. Have students there to help. Have the learning experience happen in smaller spaces.

Shaina: Homepage

Heather: It is the advisory program for MS. It is a touchpoint with an adult every day.

Casey: Transition from Elementary school to MS. Help SpEd kids who need to make that transition better. Create a learning center for kids under our umbrella to go and meet the teachers. With parents: who is the team manager?

Laurie: We watched some struggling kids go from 5th to 6th last year. We're looking for a smoother process for communication. Mr. Cameron has been out to all the elementary schools to invite parents to get support.

8. Search for board member

9. Close Meeting

Attendance:

Laurie Hunter

Heather Bout

Helen McKinlay
Carol Yelle
Shaina Brito
Charlyn Sarnecki
Ericka Woodhouse
Becky Robichaud
Eva Mostoufi
Casey Atkins
Tali Ditman-Brunye
Sarah Nichol